



By Ben Wright
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Property owners in Columbus will be mailed lower tax bills this week, thanks to a property tax rollback funded by the latest Local Option Sales Tax.

Deputy Tax Commissioner Tony Floyd said employees have been busy this week stuffing envelopes to mail 35,000 to 40,000 tax notices.

"We hope to finish this evening or wrap it up first thing in the morning," Floyd said Tuesday. "We are asking for a postmark date of Aug. 4, which means they will be on the street Thursday."

The rollback means property tax bills for this fiscal year will be lower than the amount paid in 2009. The roll back totals \$30.1 million, the amount of money collect after the sales tax collection started in January 2009.

If you own a home valued at \$100,000, the rollback will give you a break of about \$290. A similar property tax rollback occurred for the first sales tax that went into effect in 1976.

After receiving property tax notices, property owners have until Oct. 1 to pay at least 40 percent of the bill or face a penalty. The 60 percent balance must be paid by Dec. 1.

While the city plans to mail tax notices by Thursday, Floyd couldn't specify when the bills would reach property owners. Last month, the mail processing operations in Columbus were moved some 96 miles east to Macon.

Columbus Postmaster Barbara King was unavailable for comment Tuesday on how the large volume of notices would be processed.

A week ago, U.S. Rep. Sanford D. Bishop, D-Ga., sent a letter to the House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, Rep. Edolphus "Ed" Towns, D-N.Y., about the negative effects of transferring mail processing to Macon.

"Attempts by the Postal Service to improve productivity and increase efficiency have resulted in new procedures which have severely impacted postal service in the Columbus area," Bishop stated in the letter. "Especially impacted is mail originating from Columbus, Georgia, and destined for Columbus, Georgia."

Bishop noted that processing the mail in Macon could add up to three days to the time it takes local mail to be delivered back to the city.

"According to conversations with mail employees at the Columbus mail facility, there have been significantly more delays with mail, even though the Postal Service study suggested there would be an improvement in service," Bishop stated.